Round Table Topic Descriptions
SLCP Project Director Meeting
August 14-15, 2008

Session 1
2:45 - 3:25 PM

Developing A Data Driven SLC: The Inquiry Team Strategy   **Potomac Ballroom Salon A**

Charlene Jordan, Ed.D - Senior Executive Director for School Redesign, New York City Department of Education

In New York City, SLC schools are required to have an Inquiry Team in each SLC. An Inquiry Team provides an opportunity to develop school-based expertise in using data and information to improve student outcomes. Teams select a target group of struggling students within each SLC, analyze achievement data, and engage in action research and the development of specific academic interventions. The goal is to train staff to use in-depth inquiry to identify academic strengths and challenges of struggling students, resulting in interventions / programs designed to improve overall student achievement. Some challenges include training and support for over 115 SLCs in 19 schools and finding time for teams to meet during the school day.

The goal is to have a proficient Inquiry Team in every SLC that drives knowledge that can be shared school-wide and results in measurable improvements in student performance.

The work of an Inquiry Team:
- Work with SLC/school stake-holders to prioritize an SLC-wide focus – a sub-population of the SLC whose proficiency in a chosen content area falls within a particular range
- Identify a target population that shares a skill deficiency or need, using formative and summative assessments, and classroom work.
- Develop and implement differentiated, targeted instructional practices in response to research and analysis of data
- Share ongoing research, analysis and suggestions for instructional changes with whole school community in order to improve outcomes for all students
- Continuously monitor target populations, ensuring consistent implementation of revised instructional practices for all students
- Receive training and support in the use of all DOE accountability tools

Discussion Questions:
1. How can these practices translate in other school systems?
2. Who should be on an Inquiry Team?
3. How do you share practices beyond the 6-member team to impact whole school reform?
4. How do SLCs use student work and other data to diagnose needs and make instructional decisions?
5. What other types of action research might staff engage in around data?

IMPROVING AMERICA'S HIGH SCHOOLS

Integrating AVID in SLCs: **Potomac Ballroom Salon A**
Program Coordination and Teacher Supports
Pamela Hatton, SLC Project Director, Pinellas County, Florida

The four schools in our SLC cohort are dedicated to bringing a rigorous curriculum into their classes and creating a college going culture on their campuses. Since 2005, three schools accepted the challenge of implementing a new program that for many was out of their comfort zone: AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). This program takes academically capable students, enrolls them in honors and AP courses and supports them in reaching their full academic potential. The challenge that these three schools faced was trying to understand the role of AVID within an SLC school. It is not a stand alone community as many thought. AVID provides elective classes for a targeted group of students. However, the strategies that are infused in the elective classes are also strategies that are successful with all students. As the SLC Project Director it is my role to support AVID implementation within these schools and their communities. Factors that are important for communities to understand:
- AVID isn't its own community but rather all teachers within the community employ AVID strategies within their classrooms
- The AVID District Director works collaboratively with the SLC Project Director to support the implementation
- AVID needs to be considered the hub which connects SLCs school wide
- Training is an essential piece for both teachers and the Project Director
- The use of federal dollars to support AVID aligns with the goals and objectives of the SLC grant (materials, professional development, tutors, field trips)

Discussion Questions
1. How can the Project Director stimulate conversations with principals about increasing higher order thinking in all classes across SLCs?
2. If you do not have a AVID District Director but have schools that want to begin implementing AVID at their school what next steps should you do upon returning home?
3. How can the Project Director be well informed of the specific training needs of the teachers at the identified schools? (school based, regional, national)
4. What data is available from the AVID District Director?
5. If my district does not have AVID, where do I go to get additional information?

Ninth Grade Transition   **Potomac Ballroom Salon A**
Shana Hawkins, SLCP Program Director, Mountain View High School, Joint School District No. 2, Meridian, ID

The Freshman Academy focuses on a teamed approach where students have choice and voice in their studies. Each team is connected to an upper academy and focuses on issues and topics that provide real world examples. Teamed teachers utilize cross-curricular units to ensure rigor and relevance.

The Freshman Academy supports incoming students with the following strategies:
- 8th grade orientation- 8th graders visit our school in the spring
- 1st day- only Freshmen for 2 hours the day before the school year begins. They receive their schedules, have a tour, meet teachers, and learn about the culture of the school.

- Academy Leadership, a 9-10 only class. Students have the opportunity to learn about leadership, teamwork, and student council processes without having to be a member of student council.
- Freshman Recognition- a celebration for the completion of their freshman year.
- Freshman Cornerstone- a course to help students analyze who they are and how they learn so they may apply these skills to their classes and career choices, while focusing on community and post high school options.
- Teamed teachers- core teachers in English, Science, and Cornerstone classes share a 90% pure team of students.
- Weekly collaboration- same subject teachers collaborate weekly to develop common assessments and analyze data in regard to coursework and studies.

Discussion Questions:
1. How do high schools determine the needs of their incoming freshmen, then work to address those needs?
2. How do high schools set up transitions that meet the needs of incoming Freshmen?
3. What training is required of school personnel and teachers to ensure an easier transition into high school for freshmen and new students?
4. How are English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and under-represented students counseled into courses, then supported to be successful in highly rigorous coursework?
5. How is data created then utilized to continuously improve students' experience, academics, retention rates, and overall enjoyment of school?

Supporting a Culture of Continuous Improvement by   **Potomac Ballroom Salon B**
Creating Systems of Accountability

Ed Streich, SLC Program Director, Independence School District, Missouri
Kristel Barr, Principal, Truman High School, Independence, Missouri
Bill Brooks, High School Redesign Coordinator, Independence, Missouri

Improving education through SLC structures coupled with solid, research-based initiatives represents major shifts in thinking for any staff. Undergoing such change requires a staff to embrace a culture of continuous improvement. Truman High School works to build a culture of continuous improvement and performs multiple check-ups on initiatives by using various systems of accountability. These systems do not represent a top-down approach; rather, it distributes accountability to everyone involved in school improvement.

Our systems of accountability include:
- Protocols
- Focus Groups
- Technical Assistance Visits (TAVs)
- Surveys
- Sharing and Presenting Learning Experiences - Successes and Challenges
- Teacher Learning Walks
- Administrator Walk-Throughs
- Advisory Board
- Building Leadership Capacity

Discussion Questions:
1. What essential elements must be in place before establishing systems of accountability?

2. What are suggested first steps for moving into systems of accountability?
3. How are all stakeholders involved in systems of accountability?
4. How do we build leadership capacity throughout the school? Why is this important?
5. What are the logistics surrounding focus groups, surveys, and teacher learning walks?

Preparation, Access and Relationships: **Potomac Ballroom Salon B**
Keys to Increasing Positive Advanced Placement
Outcomes for All
Roni L. Jolley, Staff Liaison/AP Project Monitor, Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland

As concerns mount about the academic preparation and performance of America's children, school leaders across the state of Maryland are working together to build comprehensive programs to increase rigor, raise student achievement, and promote a college-going culture for all students. Providing greater access to Advanced Placement courses and exams, building the infrastructure that prepares students for college success are at the core of these efforts. Several systemic initiatives are being implemented to increase AP participation/performance and college readiness, including use of PSAT/NMSQT data to inform instruction and strengthen student skills, implementation of Pre-AP/AP student support programs, college/university partnerships as well as intense ongoing professional development for administrators, teachers and school counselors.

Discussion Questions

1. When expanding or building AP programs, what are some of the challenges or barriers that districts/ schools face?
2. How can expanding access and equity to AP improve the quality of teaching and learning, build relationships and influence the academic experiences of <u>all students</u>, not just those who take AP?
3. What strategies have been implemented to ensure student success in AP courses and exams, i.e., professional development, student/parent outreach, academic support services, etc.?
4. How and what data are used to identify students for AP, inform curriculum and instruction and strengthen student skills for college success?
5. AP classes should reflect the diversity of the school. How are 1st generation students, students from low income families, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and under-represented students counseled into and supported to be successful in AP courses and exams?

Developing SLC Programs Of Study That   **Potomac Ballroom Salon C**
Accelerate/Elevate Academic Achievement
and Ensure Post Secondary Success
Edward Spikes, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Chicago, Illinois

In 2005, our office required all CPS SLC high schools to implement Freshman Academies and develop a program of study for freshman and a three program of study for all other SLCs. Schools were required to develop programs of study that offered four years of math/science or at least one of the two. Schools were required to evaluate their course offerings to ensure that seniors were not provided with the least path of resistance to graduate. Research and data collected by our office indicated too many CPS graduates especially African American and Hispanic students were not prepared for their first year in college.

CPS SLC Programs of Study
- AVID or Freshman Seminar
- Summer Accelerated Courses
- Four Years Math/Science
- Four Years World Language
- Thematic Focus with emphasis on Honors and A.P.

Discussion Questions:
1. How do we ensure that there is equity in each of your SLCs?
2. What strategies can you use to increase rigor in your SLC?
3. How do you measure if your SLC curriculum is effectively preparing students for post secondary education?
4. How do you define rigor at your school and is the definition consistently applied with the entire faculty?
5. What strategies can you use to change your school culture to student centered?

Implementing Pre-AP Placement Professional   **Potomac Ballroom Salon C**
Development and Program Strategies
Jeanne Painter, Ed.D. Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland

Key tenets of high school reform include having high expectations for all students regardless of their past academic performance, removing barriers to student participation in college preparatory courses, and motivating more students to take and succeed in rigorous course work. One approach to achieving these goals is the integration of "Pre-AP" instructional strategies in grades 6 - 10. The College Board defines Pre-AP as "a suite of professional development resources" designed to equip middle and high school teachers with the strategies and tools to engage students in active, high-level learning. Our Advanced Placement Incentive Program grant, *Project NEXUS*, incorporated Pre-AP professional development and curriculum alignment strategies to increase academic rigor without causing the onset of *rigor mortis*.

Discussion Questions:
1. What instructional approaches are effective in promoting academic rigor while stimulating student engagement in learning?
2. In what ways can barriers to student participation and success in college preparatory coursework be identified and overcome?
3. What is the role of teacher vertical teams in aligning curriculum and instruction with college-level (AP) standards?
4. How can professional development be designed, implemented, and evaluated to support the implementation of Pre-AP strategies in the classroom?

Improving America's High Schools

Working Together to Track Progress Across   **Potomac Ballroom Salon D**
Multiple School Initiatives: Data Utilization Guide (D.U.G.)

Joseph Bellonte, SLC Program Director, Niagara Falls High School, Niagara Falls City School District, Niagara Falls, New York

Mary Rosenthal, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon

Focus: The challenge of utilizing and collecting data in a large urban high school with a high poverty rate meant that there are many initiatives and grants functioning at the same time. Niagara Falls created a document that allowed the administration and project director to cross territorial lines and create the "who" in terms of getting our arrows pointing in the same direction toward our common goals and objectives. Additional practitioner resources will be highlighted from current SLCP technical assistance resources.

Process: Niagara aligned our goals with milestones and then identified key personnel or the "go to" person that would be responsible for key initiatives ensuring that we are providing services to all populations.

Useful functions of using the D.U.G. document:
- Organizes objectives in a manageable attainable process
- Identifies key personnel towards attaining goals and objectives
- Is a living document that grows and changes as we do
- Is a useful tool when there is a personnel change or change in leadership so we do not lose momentum

Discussion Questions:
1. What processes do you use for Leadership team or other meetings in your school(s) and/or district to open lines of communication that foster collaboration vs. territorialism across various programs, initiatives and funding streams?
2. How do you make getting buy in from senior leadership a priority when many are so busy putting out fires?
3. How difficult or what obstacles, if any, have you had in obtaining information from your Information Systems (IS) department or staff to aide you in gaining pertinent data?
4. What, if any, successes or pitfalls have you had in working with your third party evaluator with regards to obtaining information that would be used in the SLCP Annual Performance Report (APR)?

SLCs & CTE: District and School Working Together   **Potomac Ballroom Salon D**

Angie Grasberger, SLC Project Manager, Manatee County School District, Bradenton, Florida

As Project Manager, I work with administrators of six high schools to build understanding of small learning communities, CTE and career academies, and how they all fit together. An additional support is the team of 6 Academic Advisors and 6 Career Advisors who work directly with the students, parents and staff members.

Strategies:
- Define the role of the SLC project manager and collaborate with high school administrators
- Assist the high school in assessing the needs of the school staff and students
- Guide Academic and Career Advisors in each of the six high schools who:
  - Participate on the school leadership team
  - Work with students, parents & teacher teams

- o Track data
- o Collaborate with the feeder schools for effective transition including education and career planning

Goals & Challenges of our Grant:
- Creation of SLCs at each of the six high schools included in the Cohort 7 Implementation Grant so that all students participate in some type of SLC
- Convincing administrators, guidance and teachers that what we are creating is in the best interests of our students
- Collaboration with the high school administrators to ensure that the strategies incorporated are part of the individual school improvement plan
- Determining the needs of the community as a guide to the selection of career pathways to be incorporated in the SLCs
- Providing the staff development needed to move toward SLCs within our high schools
- Collaboration with our middle schools and post-secondary institutions

Discussion Questions:
1. How do you convince administrators, guidance and teachers that what we are creating is in the best interests of our students?
2. How do you determine the types of SLCs that you want and/or need to create?
3. What kinds of staff development options are needed and how do you provide them in order to build successful small learning communities and/or career academies?
4. What are the Career Academy National Standards of Practice and why were they developed?
5. How do you collaborate with the middle schools and post-secondary institutions?

Early Intervention: Before TOO SOON becomes TOO LATE   **Potomac Ballroom Salon D**
Tom Covington, SLC Coordinator, Bassett High School, La Puente, California

Early Intervention starts three weeks into the school year at Bassett High School. Students who are behind at week three fall farther behind every week and for many of them, intervention at the end of the quarter is too late. BHS focuses on a 3 pronged attack to battle failing grades. This system cut first semester multiple F students from 183 to 92 in one year (50% cut).

Freshman, specifically, are supported in the following ways:
- AVID
- SLC Collaboration (three to four times a month)
- Advisory Tutoring time
- Pyramid of Intervention

Discussion Questions:
1. How soon is too soon for intervention?
2. What early intervention strategies are in place (that work)?
3. Are English Language Learners and Special Education students such as students in the Resource Specialist Program or Special Day Classes included in early intervention plans?
4. How is data used to support intervention?

Building your SLC One P.I.E.C.E.© at a Time: **Francis Scott Key Salon A**
Successful Implementation of your SLC and its Schedule
Chris Russo, SLC Project Director, Monticello High School, Monticello, New York

Planning, Implementing, Evaluating, Communicating, and Evolving (P.I.E.C.E.©) your SLC program. P.I.E.C.E. is a simple method to help you design and sustain SLC programs at your school. Monticello HS is committed to building and maintaining SLCs. Successful student and teacher scheduling is a key factor in creating an environment for the development of meaningful relationships among teachers and students. Providing a specific set of teachers with a particular group of students has been at the heart of our SLC schedule. As we roll out our upper school academies, we are creating academy specific pathways towards graduation and increasing the opportunity for students to participate in college level courses through our partnerships with Rochester Institute of Technology, Syracuse University, and Sullivan County Community College.

Our SLC teams/schedule is supported by
- Cohort/Academy/Team Purity
- Common Planning Time for Teachers
- Academic Focus for Freshmen
- Flexible Schedule and Separate Location for Freshmen (core classes)
- New Curriculum Bulletin

Discussion Questions
1. What are some of the roadblocks you are facing in creating your schedule?
2. What is your number one priority in creating your SLC schedule?
3. What are some effective strategies in creating your SLC schedule?

Ready Or Not, Here They Come: **Francis Scott Key Salon B**
Helping Freshmen Find Success in Algebra I
Kristine Belcher, SLCP Project Director, Herbert Hoover High School, Fresno, California

Our Strategies:
- Identify academic and behavioral interventions for freshmen, but specifically focus on mathematics achievement. Include tools to move students to achieving grade level mathematics proficiency.
- Identify an instructional lead teacher and provide pay from the site level budget
- Algebra and companion classes were kept at class size reduction sizes (22:1) and used site level staffing
- Double intervention periods (back to back). Don't split the classes over lunch & the same teacher needs to teach both sections
- 1st semester NO ALGEBRA class. Double periods are used for remediating during the first semester and algebra is offered second semester as a double period with the SAME teacher
- Department preps are common for the intervention teachers
- The focus has to be on what is best for students
- Staffing to support - making that work at the site level
- Supporting class size reduction in house (without extra staffing)

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Discussion Questions:
1. What is the project director's role in structuring interventions?
2. How do you promote second order change without it being considered "top down" decision making?
3. How can you utilize existing resources to support a successful math intervention program for freshmen success?
4. How do you get the right people "on the bus"?

Creating and Supporting a College-   **Georgetown Salon B**
Going Culture within ALL SLCs
Aaron Turner, Associate Director for SLCs, New York City Department of Education

19 large SLC high schools in New York City are striving to achieve this goal! Building a college bound culture begins in the ninth grade. Schools with the greatest success utilize a scaffolded approach to specific activities, conversations, and experiences in grades 9-12. Implementing a college bound culture requires internal and external expertise, as well as access to various college and community partners. Equity and access must be at the heart of the work schools do to enable all students to be prepared for the rigors of college.

High Expectations begin when:
- Every SLC strives to connect every student to at least one adult
- Every student receives guidance on how to connect to a goal beyond HS
- SLC teams take the lead in connecting parents to the school
- All students are connected to an extracurricular activity

Discussion Questions:
1. How does the role of the guidance counselor change in the SLC structure to support a college going culture?
2. What strategies are appropriate for each grade level (i.e. how do we scaffold the work?)
3. Beyond college partnerships, what other partnerships are useful?
4. How do you include parents in this college-going culture?

Building District Capacity During Leadership Changes   **Georgetown Salon C**

Joyce C. Mitchell, Academic Director of High School Initiatives, Smaller Learning Communities Project Director, Memphis City Schools, Memphis, Tennessee

Building district capacity during leadership changes is critical to continuous success of SLCs. Districts play a significant role in the development and institutionalization of Smaller Learning Communities. SLCs are not add-ons to the existing school organization; they are the pulse and the artery of reform.

District policies are needed to:
- support SLCs
- strengthen building-level self-governance
- support professional development needed to build capacity
- provide flexibility in allocating resources to meet needs

Memphis City Schools district staff support and collaborate with site schools in the redesign and development of SLCs through its Academic Leadership Team, Cross-Functional Teams. The district has marshaled both human and fiscal resources to support the establishment of smaller learning communities.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are the structures, processes, resources needed to provide capacity beyond leadership changes?
2. How can you engage your school communities and stakeholders in sustaining and building continuous support for SLCs?
3. What infrastructures are needed to create sustained relationships between the district office and the school?
4. How do you leverage partnerships with internal and external stakeholders to support restructuring schools through smaller learning communities?